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AUTHOR Engels, Dennis W.: Bonk, Edward C.
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ABSTRACT

A survey designed to obtain information regarding high school seniors' educational and career goals was developed and administered to 575 seniors in nine Denton County, Texas public high schools in the spring of 1978. The most frequently chosen career clusters emerging from the survey were Business and Office, Health and Service occupations. Females tended to choose traditional occupations. Graduates of rural schools and more males than females planned to begin work immediately following graduation. Over half the seniors planned to continue formal education. Realistic estimates of beginning income (between $6,000 and $14,000 per year) were made by 53% males and 52% of females, with females expecting lower incomes than males. Family and friends were cited as the most influential factors in choosing future activities. Seniors felt their school had helped their social and self-development but had not adequately prepared them for jobs. Most desired more career counseling. In selecting colleges, seniors placed most value in their own judgments and little on teacher and counselor influence. Finding out which jobs were open, and having the skills and knowledge to do the job, were seen as major obstacles to employment. (NRB)

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# HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS' EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL GOALS

BY: DENNIS W. ENGELS, Ph.D.

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EDWARD C. BONK, Ed. D.

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Dennis Engels is Assistant Professor of Counselor Education, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas.

Edward Bonk is Professor Emeritus, North Texas State University.

When educators from a local urban public high school requested assistance in launching a follow-up study of former students, the authors collaborated with counselors, administrators and teachers in the planning and initial implementation of a follow-up program. Based on the author's experience in implementing follow-up programs in similar institutions, it was suggested and mutually agreed that a programmatic approach would be more useful than a one-time follow-up study, for obtaining essential information in improving effectiveness of the school's educational program.

In the absence of any precedent for a systematic follow-up program at that school, (previous follow-up efforts had been designed and conducted by individual school personnel on an isolated as-required basis), it was agreed that a logical starting point would be to survey the post secondary educational and career goals and aspirations of graduating seniors.

Following the successful 1977 Senior Survey at that school, the effort was successfully expanded to include eight rural Denton County public high schools in a 1978 senior survey, as the first step in a county wide follow-up program. In this article, selected highlights of the results of the 1978 study are presented, implications are briefly discussed and uses of the data are summarized.

To date, data have been used to inform local personnel of the broadcast and print media, advisory groups, parents,

civic organizations, students, teachers and administrators. These presentations have ranged from formal offerings at large meetings to informal discussions with small groups. The public relations value of this information program has been highly positive.

Data have been presented at teacher in-service meetings in various specific disciplinary areas and in district wide teacher-administrator in-service meetings. Classroom guidance activities using survey findings as a main or supplemental focal point have been conducted with current seniors and other secondary school students to stimulate student discussion regarding various aspects of educational and career development.

While it would be unreasonable to expect rapid program changes based on initial survey findings, plans for using the data and for making changes based on the data have materialized in participating schools. When teachers at one school noted various aspects among survey findings of their seniors, an effort was immediately launched to examine the possibility of changing or permitting an exception to established policy of the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Based on survey findings, a proposal to grant this school an exception to TEA policy was submitted and later formally presented to TEA officials who agreed to study the proposal. TEA officials stated they were very impressed with the data and the presentation. After some

deliberation, they agreed that the proposal made eminent sense for that school, and the school was granted an exception to TEA policy.

Overall, then, much has happened as a result of this initial step toward an on-going follow-up program. Participating schools can now demonstrate that they possess pertinent data not otherwise available and that they are indeed conducting and have an established plan to continue building a systematic follow-up program.

A first year follow-up study was begun in 1979 and a follow-up study of school noncompleters is planned for implementation during 1980. Efforts to successfully complete and refine these initial steps are underway in varying degrees at all participating schools, but at this point, any judgment of long term effect of this program would be premature. To afford the reader an idea of focus and findings from the 1978 Denton County Senior Survey, selected highlights are presented here in table and narrative form.

Each of the high schools received a set of tables which included the data pertinent to the school. The third column on these tables is for the urban high school. This school composed about half the population in the study so the overall results would be heavily influenced if it were not treated separately. The remaining eight high schools were located in small rural towns.

Information shown on the following tables was extracted from the computer printouts. Each table is based on seniors' responses to one of the 49 items on the questionnaire administered to the seniors during the spring of the year. The figures on all tables reflect percentages of the students who responded to the questionnaire item. Each table, except number five, has three columns of figures listed according to the sex of respondents. The first column reflects percentages of respondents in all nine schools. The second column contains the same information for all of the schools except the urban high school. The third column is based on responses of seniors from the urban high school.

The exception to the above format will be in Tables 5, 5A, and 5B. The information for all schools is printed in Table 5. Table 5A contains the information for all schools excluding the urban school and Table 5B pertains only to the urban high school. Only nine of the forty-nine items from the questionnaire were selected for analysis and presentation in these tables. Obviously, there was much more information in the printouts which proved to be valuable in planning curriculum, counseling, and follow-up programs.

Table 1:

Students were asked to select the cluster which was to be their career goal. Business and Office, Health, and Public Service occupations were the three most fequently chosen clusters.

Females selected these clusters by three to one over males. Males had a distinctly higher percentage choosing construction and manufacturing. No females selected Construction, Ecology and Environment, or Marine Science. It appears the females made choices in traditional work environments.

Table 2:

A slightly higher percentage of males than females saw themselves going to work immediately following graduation. Graduates of rural schools selected this response significantly more often than graduates from all schools combined.

Fifty-three percent of all males and 54 percent of all females surveyed plan to continue their formal education beyond high school, most of them in a public college or university. In the rural schools, 38 percent of the males and 32 percent of the females plan to continue their formal education.

Table 3:

Fifty-three percent of all males and 52 percent of all females estimated their income upon entering their chosen career field between $6,000 and $14,000 per year. This is probably a fairly realistic estimate, based on 1978 average incomes in the fields chosen.

Forty percent of the females in schools other than the urban school indicated they expected to earn less than $6,000 a year, whereas 12% of the males from the same schools expected to earn more than $20,000 a year upon entering their career field. These expectations appear unrealistic.

Table 4:

Data in Table 4 reflect the highest yearly income the seniors expect to earn. This appears to be more realistic than estimates of starting salaries, but based on currect average salaries, male expectations appear slightly optimistic. Females reported expected peak incomes lower than males.

Table 5:

Perceived influence of some of the resources available to help seniors choose their activities for next year are designated in Table 5. Family and friends were by far the most influential factors in choices made by the seniors. On the other hand, career materials reportedly had little impact on their choices. It would be interesting to know why seniors find these materials of so little assistance in their decision-making process. In schools other than the urban school, military recruiters have had more contact and reported influence.

Concern for inflation and the shrinking value of the dollar may be evident in the significant number of seniors who desire more counseling in financial and money matters. More than two-thirds of female respondents and a large percentage of all seniors expressed a desire for more counseling in career opportunities and career planning, and help finding a job.

Table 7:

More than half of the seniors indicated that their schools helped them understand the importance of self-development, their

responsibilities as citizens, and social, political, and economic problems. In sharp contrast, only about one-fourth believe they were adequately prepared "to find a job", or that they had received adequate career counseling. However, less than one-half of the seniors said that schools should prepare students to find a job.

Table 8:

The information on this chart indicates that seniors placed overwhelming value on their own judgment and that teachers and counselors had little influence on seniors' choice of school. While this data may seem negative, it is entirely consistent with effective guidance practice that educators facilitate student decisions rather than influence or coerce decisions.

The second most-cited reason for choice of school is course offerings. One of the least-cited reasons for choice of a school is the influence of teachers and counselors. It may be that teachers and counselors were not presenting biased information on institutions of higher education, or they may have had little contact with the seniors who were attempting to arrive at a decision.

Table 9:

Two items - finding out which jobs are open and having the skills and knowledge to do the job - were most often seen by the seniors as major obstacles to getting a job. Could it be that more emphasis is needed on employability skills in our career counseling program?

These have been selected highlights of findings from the 1978 Denton County Senior Survey. Data from the survey have provided one basis for evaluating program effectiveness. As the follow-up program progresses it is expected that a more composite picuture will develop, leading, ultimately, to a richer educational experience for students in all participating schools.

Table 1

CAREER GOAL BY CLUSTER

| | TOTAL | | TOTAL EXCL. URBAN | | URBAN SCHOOL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Agriculture, agribus, and natural resources | 9 | 2 | 10 | 2 | 9 | 2 |
| Business and office | 16 | 29 | 10 | 32 | 21 | 26 |
| Communication and media | 6 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 6 |
| Construction | 14 | 0 | 21 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| Consumer and homemaking education | 0 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Ecology and environment | 4 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Fine arts and humanities | 4 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 8 |
| Health occupations | 4 | 18 | 1 | 17 | 6 | 19 |
| Manufacturing | 12 | 1 | 12 | 1 | 13 | 1 |
| Marine science | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Marketing and distribution | 5 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| Personal services | 3 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| Public service | 8 | 13 | 8 | 15 | 8 | 12 |
| Recreation and hospitality | 3 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 4 |
| Transportation | 8 | 1 | 9 | 0 | 6 | 2 |

Table 2

MAJOR ACTIVITY FOR NEXT YEAR

| | TOTAL | | TOTAL EXCL. URBAN | | URBAN SCHOOL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Travel or loaf for more than a summer | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Begin full time military service | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Become a homemaker | 0 | 6 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 2 |
| Begin a full-time paying job | 38 | 33 | 55 | 49 | 24 | 21 |
| Begin an apprenticeship on on-the-job training program | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 0 |
| Attend a state supported two year college | 8 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 3 |
| Attend a private vocational or trade school | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Attend a state support college or university | 37 | 42 | 25 | 19 | 47 | 59 |
| Attend a private college or university | 4 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 8 |

Table 3

INCOME EXPECTED UPON ENTERING CAREER FIELD

| | TOTAL | | TOTAL EXCL. URBAN | | URBAN SCHOOL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| $2,000 or less | 2 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 7 |
| $2,001 to $4,000 | 7 | 12 | 8 | 13 | 6 | 12 |
| $4,001 to $6,000 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 18 | 3 | 7 |
| $6,001 to $8,000 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 8 | 10 |
| $8,001 to $10,000 | 13 | 22 | 16 | 17 | 11 | 25 |
| $10,001 to $12,000 | 15 | 9 | 16 | 6 | 15 | 12 |
| $12,001 to $14,000 | 13 | 7 | 12 | 6 | 13 | 8 |
| $14,001 to $16,000 | 9 | [illegible] | 6 | 2 | 11 | 6 |
| $16,001 to $18,000 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 4 |
| $18,001 to $20,000 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 3 |
| $20,001 or more | 12 | 1 | 12 | 1 | 13 | 1 |

Table 4

HIGHEST EXPECTED INCOME

| | TOTAL | | TOTAL EXCL. URBAN | | URBAN SCHOOL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| $2,000 or less | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| $2,001 to $4,000 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| $4,001 to $6,000 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| $6,001 to $8,000 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 12 | 2 | 2 |
| $8,001 to $10,000 | 3 | 11 | 5 | 11 | 1 | 12 |
| $10,001 to $12,000 | 3 | 12 | 5 | 17 | 2 | 3 |
| $12,001 to $14,000 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| $14,001 to $16,000 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 8 |
| $16,001 to $18,000 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| $18,001 to $20,000 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 14 |
| $20,000 or more | 53 | 21 | 41 | 11 | 63 | 29 |

Table 5

RESOURCES IN DECISION FOR NEXT YEAR'S PLANS
(All Schools)

| | N/C | | VERY HELPFUL | | SOME HELP | | NO HELP | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| High School counselor | 14 | 16 | 19 | 21 | 40 | 44 | 23 | 17 |
| High School teachers | 7 | 7 | 20 | 28 | 46 | 44 | 24 | 19 |
| Family members and relatives | 1 | 2 | 64 | 61 | 28 | 31 | 3 | 4 |
| Friends | 3 | 2 | 32 | 34 | 47 | 46 | 14 | 15 |
| College or vocational school representatives | 28 | 30 | 13 | 15 | 23 | 25 | 32 | 27 |
| Military recruiters | 29 | 43 | 5 | 2 | 11 | 7 | 51 | 44 |
| School catalogues or bulletins | 18 | 18 | 9 | 16 | 28 | 37 | 41 | 26 |
| Newspapers, TV and radio | 13 | 13 | 13 | 9 | 35 | 36 | 36 | 38 |
| People in the activity I plan on | 21 | 27 | 24 | 24 | 22 | 27 | 28 | 18 |
| Visits to school or job site | 21 | 27 | 25 | 23 | 26 | 29 | 24 | 16 |
| Career materials in high school (Films, tapes, slides) | 27 | 29 | 8 | 9 | 23 | 23 | 39 | 34 |

Table 5A

RESOURCES IN DECISION FOR NEXT YEAR'S PLANS
(All Schools, Except Urban School)

| | N/C | | VERY HELPFUL | | SOME HELP | | NO HELP | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| High school counselor | 15 | 14 | 14 | 17 | 45 | 49 | 23 | 16 |
| High school teachers | 8 | 5 | 16 | 37 | 43 | 34 | 29 | 19 |
| Family members and relatives | 1 | 2 | 62 | 56 | 28 | 32 | 4 | 6 |
| Friends | 4 | 2 | 30 | 36 | 49 | 43 | 13 | 13 |
| College or vocational school representatives | 32 | 27 | 9 | 16 | 19 | 23 | 36 | 27 |
| Military recruiters | 21 | 34 | 8 | 2 | 14 | 11 | 54 | 46 |
| School catalogues or bulletins | 17 | 20 | 6 | 13 | 23 | 29 | 50 | 30 |
| Newspapers, TV and radio | 8 | 15 | 10 | 13 | 36 | 39 | 43 | 27 |
| People in the activity I plan on | 21 | 27 | 21 | 19 | 19 | 27 | 32 | 19 |
| Visits to school or job site | 21 | 26 | 26 | 17 | 23 | 33 | 27 | 16 |
| Career materials in high school (films, tapes, slides) | 19 | 20 | 9 | 7 | 26 | 23 | 42 | 42 |

Table 5B

RESOURCES IN DECISION FOR NEXT YEAR'S PLANS
(Urban High School Only)

| | N/C | | VERY HELPFUL | | SOME HELP | | NO HELP | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| High school counselor | 14 | 18 | 23 | 23 | 35 | 40 | 23 | 18 |
| High school teachers | 5 | 9 | 24 | 21 | 49 | 52 | 19 | 18 |
| Family members and relatives | 1 | 2 | 66 | 65 | 29 | 29 | 3 | 2 |
| Friends | 2 | 2 | 34 | 33 | 46 | 48 | 15 | 16 |
| College or Vocational School Representatives | 25 | 32 | 16 | 13 | 17 | 26 | 29 | 27 |
| Military Recruiters | 37 | 50 | 2 | 2 | 10 | 4 | 49 | 42 |
| School Catalogues or bulletins | 20 | 15 | 11 | 18 | 33 | 44 | 34 | 22 |
| Newspapers, TV and Radio | 17 | 12 | 15 | 7 | 35 | 33 | 31 | 47 |
| People in the activity I plan on | 21 | 27 | 26 | 28 | 25 | 27 | 25 | 17 |
| Visits to school or job site | 21 | 27 | 25 | 28 | 29 | 27 | 21 | 18 |
| Career materials in high school (Films, tapes, slides) | 33 | 36 | 8 | 11 | 20 | 23 | 36 | 29 |

Table 6

COUNSELING SERVICES DESIRED IN THE FUTURE

| | TOTAL | | TOTAL EXCL. URBAN | | URBAN SCHOOL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Counseling in financial and money matters | 47 | 42 | 45 | 43 | 49 | 42 |
| Counseling in personal, social matters | 9 | 21 | 8 | 18 | 9 | 23 |
| Counseling in career opportunities and career planning | 47 | 64 | 38 | 58 | 55 | 69 |
| Counseling in educational and training opportunities | 36 | 37 | 39 | 34 | 34 | 39 |
| Counseling in help to finding a job | 31 | 51 | 32 | 52 | 29 | 50 |

Table 7

RESPONSES TO STATEMENTS ABOUT SCHOOL

| | TOTAL | | TOTAL EXCL. URBAN | | URBAN SCHOOL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| School helped me see the importance of developing my abilities and talents. | 58 | 66 | 50 | 61 | 65 | 71 |
| School placed enough emphasis on vocational and technical programs | 34 | 42 | 29 | 36 | 38 | 47 |
| School offered enough practical experience. | 36 | 32 | 25 | 24 | 46 | 39 |
| School helped me learn about myself. | 42 | 59 | 36 | 55 | 47 | 63 |
| School prepared me in "how to find a job". | 22 | 33 | 18 | 34 | 26 | 33 |
| School provided adequate career counseling. | 27 | 32 | 23 | 26 | 30 | 38 |
| School helped me achieve an understanding of social, political, and economic problems. | 57 | 55 | 52 | 51 | 61 | 58 |
| School helped me become more aware of my responsibilities as a citizen. | 55 | 56 | 53 | 58 | 56 | 55 |
| This school should prepare students to find jobs. | 40 | 42 | 47 | 54 | 34 | 32 |

Table 8

REASONS FOR SCHOOL SELECTION

| | TOTAL | | TOTAL EXCL. URBAN | | URBAN SCHOOL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Parents and relatives favored this choice | 38 | 47 | 32 | 36 | 43 | 56 |
| Friends favored this choice | 21 | 19 | 18 | 17 | 24 | 21 |
| Counselors and teachers favored this choice | 13 | 11 | 15 | 11 | 12 | 12 |
| I favored this choice | 63 | 69 | 54 | 56 | 71 | 79 |
| School is close to home | 37 | 47 | 34 | 39 | 40 | 53 |
| School is far from home | 11 | 7 | 10 | 5 | 11 | 9 |
| School is small | 19 | 18 | 22 | 22 | 16 | 15 |
| School is large | 12 | 13 | 8 | 7 | 15 | 18 |
| Course offerings | 43 | 51 | 36 | 43 | 50 | 58 |
| Extracurricular activities offered | 20 | 21 | 11 | 17 | 27 | 25 |
| Scholastic Standards | 20 | 16 | 12 | 9 | 27 | 22 |
| School reputation | 34 | 33 | 23 | 25 | 44 | 39 |
| I can afford this school | 32 | 38 | 29 | 28 | 35 | 46 |

Table 9

MAJOR OBSTACLES TO GETTING A JOB
(Multiple Responses)

| | TOTAL | | TOTAL EXCL. URBAN | | URBAN SCHOOL | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Finding out which jobs are open | 32 | 43 | 40 | 45 | 26 | 42 |
| Knowing how to apply and fill out applications | 12 | 21 | 14 | 23 | 11 | 20 |
| Having the skills and knowledge needed to do the job | 47 | 52 | 53 | 57 | 43 | 48 |
| Knowing what I can do | 22 | 25 | 21 | 31 | 23 | 20 |
| Meeting work codes such as dress, appearance, time clocks | 11 | 15 | 12 | 17 | 10 | 14 |
| Other | 5 | 9 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 10 |